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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3314

NODIS

FOR ATHERTON FROM BROWN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LE
SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL SWEEPSTAKES

1. AT PRESENT THE BACKERS OF SARKIS AND RAYMOND EDDE SEEM TO BE ON A COLLISION COURSE, REMOVING MOST OF THE HOPE THAT EXISTED LAST WEEK THAT THE CHRISTIANS AND THE LEFT COULD AGREE ON ONE CANDIDATE OR THE OTHER.

2. THE SYRIANS ARE PLAYING AN INCREASINGLY KEY ROLE. IT IS BECOMING QUITE CLEAR THAT THEY NOT ONLY FAVOR SARKIS BUT ARE GOING TO USE MUSCLE TO TRY TO ORCE THE ISSUE. THEIR ATTITUDE ABOUT WANTING TO DO NOTHING WITH REGARD TO FUTURE PLANNING IN LEBANON UNTIL THEY HEAR THE VIEWS OF THE NEW PRESIDENT IS A PRETTY CLEAR INDICATION OF WHO THEY THINK THE NEW PRE-SIDENT WILL BE.

3. JUMBLATT MEANWHILE HAS BECOME MORE OPEN IN HIS SUPPORT FOR RAYMOND EDDE. IT SHOULD BE STRESSED THAT THIS SUPPORT IS SHARED BY A BROAD SEGMENT OF CONSERVATIVE MOSLEMS. EDDE, FOR HIS PART, JUST WILL NOT OR CANNOO KEEP STILL. HE (UNNECESSARILY) INFURIATED THE SYRIANS A FEW MONTHS AGO BY HINTING ABOUT A SYRO-ISRAELI PLOT AGAINST LEBANON. JUST WHEN THE DUST SEEMED TO HAVE SETTLED SOMEWHAT HE STIRRED IT ALL UP AGAIN YESTERDAY BY SPEAKING OF A SYRIAN INVASION.

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4. THE BACKERS OF SARKIS GOT THE JUMP ON EDDE WITH RESPECT

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TO SAUDI SUPPORT, BUT EDDE'S BACKERS HAVE BEEN TRYING TO MAKE
UP FOR LOST GROUUND AND THE SAUDIS SEEM TO BE WAVERING.
ON THE OTHER HAND, CONSERVATIVE MOSLEM INITIATIVES DIRECTLY
TT DAMASCUS (THAT OF FORMER PRIMIN SAEB SALAM AND THE
JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR TO LEBANON FOR EXAMPLE) DO NOT SEEM TO
HAVE ADVANCED EDDE'S CAUSE TOO FAR. (RUMOR HAS IT THAT AN
ULTERIOR PURPOSE OF THE GORCE MISSION ISS TO PUSH EDDE'S CANDIDACY
WITH THE SYRIANS.) NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE EGYPTIANS APPEAR TO BE
PUSHING EDDE IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THE FACT THAT THEIR
SYRIAN RIVALS ARE PUSHING SARKIS.

5. PRESSURE ON INDIVIDUAL PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS IS GREAT.
THE TRADITIONAL BRIBES ARE BEING SUPPLEMENTED BY THREATS.

6. WE HAD ASSUMED THAT IF THE RIGHT AND LEFT GOT TOGETHER ON
A CANDIDATE THE SYRIANS WOULD GO ALONG. WE ARE NO LONGER COM-
PLETELY SURE OF THIS WITH REGARD TO ALL CANDIDATES, ESPECIALLX
EDDE.

7. INEVITABLY TALK OF A COMPROMISE CANDIDATE IS COMING UP.
JUMBLATT HAS ALREADY MENTIONED PIERRE HELOU. HELOU HAS APPARNTLY
PURCHASED JUMBLATT'S SUPPORT, WHICH JUMBLATT IS WILLING TO
GIVE BECAUSE HE KNOWS HELOU IS A WEAK MAN WHOM HE CAN CONTROL.
BUT IF THE CHOICE IS NEITHER SARKIS NOR EDDE THE FIELD IS REALLY
WIDE OPEN, WITH MICHEL KHOURY SON OF THE FORMER PRESIDENT
(KHOURY IS ALLEGEDLY SUPPORTED BY THE BRITISH) AND EDDE'S BROTHER,
PIERRE, HEADING THE LIST.

8. ON TIMING, IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY. FRANGIE CLAIMS THAT
ELECTIONS WILL TAKE PLACE NEXT WEEK BUT THIS SEEMS OPTIMISTIC.
ONE NEW DELAYING FACTOR IS THAT THE CHRISTIANS MAY BE FORCED TO
BACK CHAMOUN FOR A WHILE. WHILE SARKIS IS THEIR CANDIDATE, THEY
OFFERED TO BACK CHAMOUN AS A GESTURE THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE
TURNED DOWN BUT WAS NOT.

9. TWENTY-SEVEN OF THE NIGHTY-EIGHT DEPUTIES HAVE BANDED
TOGETHER AS AN INDEPENDENT GROUP UNDER PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKER
ASSAD TO CONSIDER VARIOUS CANDIDATES. HOW EFFECTIVE THEY WILL
BE IS STILL UNKNOWN.

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10. IN SUMMARY, IT'S A VERY LOOSE SITUATION. EVERYONE TRIES
TO PUT ME ON SPOT TO TAKE SIDES. I'VE REFUSED. AS NOTED ABOVE,
EDDE AND SARKIS COULD KNOCK EACH OTHER OUT. UNTIL THIS BECOMES
CLEARER OTHER POSSIBLITIES REMAIN DIM. I'LL KEEP YOU POSTED.
BROWN

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